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Risk Assessment Evaluation for Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations



Risk Management Evaluation For Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Office of Research and Development
National Risk Management Research Laboratory
Cincinnati, Ohio

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Foreword

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is charged by Congress with protecting the Nation's land, air, and water resources. Under a mandate of national environmental laws, the Agency strives to formulate and implement actions leading to a compatible balance between human activities and the ability of natural systems to support and nurture life. To meet this mandate, EPA's research program is providing data and technical support for solving environmental problems today and building a science knowledge base necessary to manage our ecological resources wisely, understand how pollutants affect our health, and prevent or reduce environmental risks in the future.

The National Risk Management Research Laboratory (NRMRL) is the Agency's center for investigation of technological and management approaches for preventing and reducing risks from pollution that threaten human health and the environment. The focus of the Laboratory's research program is on methods and their cost-effectiveness for prevention and control of pollution to air, land, water, and subsurface resources; protection of water quality in public water systems; remediation of contaminated sites, sediments and ground water; prevention and control of indoor air pollution; and restoration of ecosystems. NRMRL collaborates with both public and private sector partners to foster technologies that reduce the cost of compliance and to anticipate emerging problems. NRMRL's research provides solutions to environmental problems by: developing and promoting technologies that protect and improve the environment; advancing scientific and engineering information to support regulatory and policy decisions; and providing the technical support and information transfer to ensure implementation of environmental regulations and strategies at the national, state, and community levels.

This publication has been produced as part of the Laboratory's strategic long-term research plan. It is published and made available by EPA's Office of Research and Development to assist the user community and to link researchers with their clients.

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Abstract

The National Risk Management Research Laboratory (NRMRL) developed a Risk Management Evaluation (RME) to provide information to help plan research dealing with the environmental impact of concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs). Methods of animal production in the U.S. have undergone fundamental changes in the last 30 years. The majority of meat, dairy, and poultry production has been concentrated into large facilities. Dairies with more than 2,000 cows and swine operations with more than 10,000 hogs are not unusual. Broiler houses with 50,000 birds are common. With the concentration of animals has come a concomitant concentration of manure production. One animal facility with a large population of animals can easily equal a small city in terms of waste production. Current practices of waste handling often include minimal or no treatment before the wastes are disseminated into the environment. The RME was developed to provide characterization of the waste problem, and a description of common environmental stressors and their movement including the air transport of pollutants. Current risk management practices in the animal industry are described, along with treatment approaches such as anaerobic/aerobic digestion, constructed wetlands, and disturbed land reclamation. Finally, suggested areas for future research are presented to help focus planning for the near future.

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